THE HISTORY OF WAT TYLER AND JACK STRAW.

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CHAP. I.

Of the Troubles which happened in the Reign of King Richard II.

RICHARD II. ſon of Edward ſurnamed the Black Prince, and Grandſon of Edward III. came to the crown of England when he was but eleven years of age. On account of his tender years the weighty point of government both of him and his kingdom, was put into the hands of

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of certain Biſhops, Earls, Barons and Juſtices; who either by the fear of diſcontenting him, or neglect of their duty or both, every one was more ready to pleaſe him with childiſh delightful conceits, than aſſiſt him with good and profitable counſel to qualify him the better for that Important office in which he was placed.

In the beginning of the King's reign the French on the one ſide, and the Scots on the other, cruelly infeſted this land; until John Philpot, Citizen and Alderman of London, lamenting the miſery of the times, occaſioned by the neglect of ſecuring the coaſt, and ſcouring the ſeas whereby the merchants durſt not traffick abroad for fear of pyrates, who hovered in every corner, but eſpecially one Mercer, a Scottiſh Rover, who had got together a great fleet of French, Scotch, and Spaniards, and with them did rob all they met, and did a great deal of miſchief, complained thereof to the King's Council, acquainting them with the daily wrongs ſuſtained by the ſaid Mercer, imploring their aid; but receiving from them no relief, he at his own coſt fitted out a fleet of ſhips, and went with

them himſelf to ſea; and in a ſhort time took the ſaid Mercer, and recovered all the prizes which he had formerly taken, with fifteen Spaniſh bottoms, well laden with riches, beſides many French and Scotch Ships; for which brave Action he incurred the diſlike of moſt of the noblemen, from whom they thought he ſeemed to have ſnatched, by this hazardous & fortunate attempt, the native cognizance of true nobility. Amongſt whom were Hugh, Earl of Stafford, nettled with the general commendations given to Philpot for this gallant exploit, publickly at the conncil table objected againſt him, the unlawfulneſs of the act, without authority, being but a private man, to levy arms. But Philpot, with an undaunted reſolution, not only juſtified the act, as though not altogether lawful, yet very expedient being done for the honor of the King, and the ſafety, profit, and ſecurity of the Public in general; but alſo reſtored the object of improvidence and ſlothful neglect upon the reſt of the council, ſo that being greatly aſhamed, they knew not what reply to make, and he returned with the general applauſe of the Citizens, and moſt of the courtiers.

This gloriousand ever memorable deed was performed in the year 1378.

The next year, the third of the reign, the King of France preſuming to take the advantage of the King's minority, with ſome Spaniſh aid, landed in the South-Weſt part of England, ranſacked and burned the Towns of Plymouth, Dartmouth, Rye, and other coaſt towns, and were then marching farther into the main land, until, by the Earl of Cambridge, uncle to the King, and the Earls of Saliſbury and Buckingham, and their forces, they were encountered, and beat back to their ſhips; but ſoon after landed again, and did very conſiderable damage to the towns of Dover, Winchelſea, Haſtings, and Graveſend, from whence, uninterrupted they returned to France.

For the prevention of the like injuries for the future, and revenge for thoſe already offered, a parliament was aſſembled at Weſtminſter; in which a ſubſidy of four pence per poll of each ſex throughout the whole kingdom, above the age of fourteen years, was granted to the King. The levying of this tax procured much heart burning, and very much alienated the hearts of

the ſubjects from the King. With that money preparations was made, and eight thouſand men went to France, under the conduct of Thomas Woodſtock the King's uncle, who paſſing over Soam, Oyle, and Marne Rivers, ſpoiled and burnt all the country, and ranſacked the Inhabitants, till he came to Britany; and having taken ſufficient ſatisfaction for the before mentioned inſult given to the King his nephew returned home again.

CHAP. II.

Of the dangerous rebellion raiſed by Wat Tyler and Jack Straw.

ABOUT this time one John Ball, a factious clergyman, a ſcholar of Whickliff, obſerving the common people greatly to murmur at the payment of the aforeſaid ſubſidy; in all places where he came, uſed ſecretly to inform the inferior ſort of people, ſuch as were meanly educated, poor and needy, that by their original deſcent from Adam all men were

of one condition; that the laws of this kingdom were injurious, and hindered us participating of that Chriſtian liberty we are born to poſſeſs; nay, moſt unjuſt, by making ſo great a difference of mens eſtates, preferring ſome to be peers and potentates, giving to ſome large authority, and enlarging others poſſeſſions, and taking advantage of the humble and pliable condition and carriage of others, keep them in ſervility and baſeneſs, ſcarcely giving them allowance of ſubſiſtance, and not that neither, without ſweat and hard labour; when among Chriſtians there ſhould be an equal Share of all things in common, taking this for his theme:

When Adam delv'd and Eve ſpan,
Who was then a Gentleman?

With ſuch like ſeditious and traiterous perſwaſions this tardy prieſt did prepare the vulgar who are always ready to entertain the leaſt profeſſors of rebellion, and fit them for inſurrection upon the ſlighteſt occaſion.—This doctrine once on foot, ſpread itſelf from ruſtic to gentle, and from ſhire to ſhire; that at length it in-

fatuated them, and infeſted the city of London, the commons whereof, that is to ſay, the poorer ſort of mechanicks and handicrafts were deſparately inclined to mutiny on the reaſons aforeſaid, incited and invited the multitude, who were alſo prepared, to come thither, promiſing them their aſſiſtance and furtherance.

Hereupon, a rude parcel of ruffians, under the leading of Wat Tyler, a taylor,) who commanded in chief, with their pious miniſter John Ball, Jack Straw (a threſher,) Jack Shepherd, of the Council of War, under the title of the King's Men, and the Servants of the Common Wealth of England, came to London, ranſacking by the way, and demoliſhing from Eſſex ſide all the fair ſtructures and buildings of the Nobility and Gentry. They ſummoned the King to give them a meeting, who accordingly accompanied with his beſt councellors, to his barge, and went to Graveſend; but ſeeing the rabble ſo ragged and rogue-like, nothing but a company of blackguards, compacted of the off ſcum of the people, it was held not proper for the King to venture his perſon amongſt them, and ſo he returned back

to the Tower, from which place he had come.

CHAP. III.

Of the further Villainies committed by Wat Tyler and his diſſolute Crew; and of his being ſlain by Sir William Walworth.

THE next day theſe unruly rakeſhames approached London, where they found the Gates locked up, and the bridge drawn and well guarded; upon this they ſent a meſſage to Sir William Walworth, then Lord Mayor of London, that if they had not admittance into the city immediately they would deſtroy all the men, women, and children on the Southwark ſide; plunder their Houſes, and ſet fire to the Borough and Churches there; withal vowing Vengeance on the citizens, if they forced their way into the City.—For the Prevention of this it was ordered that the Gates ſhould be directly opened, and the Bridge let down; whereupon they entered, where their fury, with fair

and ſmooth Words, was for that Night pacified; only the commander Wat Tyler, ſent for his quondam maſter, one Richard Lyon, an ancient grave citizen, and in thankful requital for a moderate puniſhment given him in his apprenticeſhip, he cauſed his head to be ſtruck off and ſtuck upon a pole, and carried in triumph before him.

The next day he went to the Savoy, a houſe belonging to John of Gaunt, the King's uncle, which they alſo rifled, and burnt, and inhumanly murdered all the chief officers they found there.—They committed ſacrilidge in all churches and religious houſes, robbing the houſes of the ſtudents in the law, committing to the fire all their books and records, proclaiming death to any that ſhould be found to know Law or Literature. They ſpoiled all foreigners inhabiting in or near London; and their number increaſing to about threeſcore thouſand, they came to St. Catherine's; and from thence ſent the King word to attend on their pleaſure at Mile-end.

But no ſooner was the King gone out of the Tower to the place appointed, but

Tyler, with ſome of his comrades entered the Tower gates, rifled the King's lodging, barbarouſly treated the Queen Mother, both with bad Language and hard blows; and apprehended (as he was performing the duties of the church) the Reverend Simon, Archbiſhop of Canterbury, who formerly had puniſhed though but ſlightly, their prolocutor John Ball, when he firſt began to broach his rebellious tenets, and ſtrcuk off his head. They broke open all the Priſons, ſet at Liberty the criminals, and then went to meet his Majeſty at Mile End.

The King demanded what they required in that hoſtile Manner? when with a confuſed noiſe ſome cried Manumiſſion, others Maintenance, others to have their land freed from ſervice; and every one calling for what he thought would moſt be for his own particular Intereſt.

The King promiſed to call a Parliament, and thereby, which he now granted, promiſed to eſtabliſh what to that purpoſe ſhould be ſet down in writing; and further gave a general Pardon and ſafe conduct for their return every man to his own habitation, whereupon ſome of the

beſt of thoſe rebels accepted the King's offer, diſbanded and went to their reſpective homes, and the Londoners returned.

But Tyler, whoſe aim was for robbing the city of London, and the extirpation of all who were any ways noted for learning, with twenty thouſand of the Drugs and ſkum of his rake-hells, came into Smithfield; to whom the King guarded by a ſmall ſtrength, attend by William Walworth, then Lord Mayor, John Philpot. (the darling of the Mariners on account of the noble Actions mentioned in the beginning of this hiſtory) Nicholas Bramber, Alderman of London, and Sir John Newton, and ſome few others, all men of reſolute and brave Spirits, preſented him and was by the traiterous Tyler received in a moſt baſe and ſcornful Manner, with many affronts to his followers, inſomuch thar John Philpot told the King the abuſes were inſufferable, and if he would but command his Lieutenant, meaning the Lord Mayor, to arreſt the Traytor, he would loſe his own life if it were not accordingly performed.

Nevertheleſs, the King doubting the ſequel, was rather unwilling to provoke a

mad dog, and with fair ſpeeches and a pleaſing countenance, he began to expoſtulate with Tyler, and was willing to condeſend to come to diſhonourable ſubmiſſions (betwixt ſovereign and ſubject) to content him; but the more he found the King pliable, the more unreaſonable were his Demands, and inſolent his behaviour: Among many other villainous as well as unreaſonable demands, the following was one, viz. To have all law aboliſhed; affirming with an execrable oath, before night all the laws of England ſhould paſs through the ſtrait, clapping his hands to his mouth.

In the mean time Philpot had ſent into the city to Sir Robert Knowles, who was left behind to keep the multitude quiet, to make known the King's danger and their own; conjuring them by their duty to the King, and love to him to make all poſſible ſpeed to their reſcues. And then prompting the Lord Mayor what to do, having by Sir John Newton's help drawn cloſe together as many of the King's followers as were preſent, he attended to the ſequel.—Tyler perſiſting in his ſupportable arrogance, he demanded the King's

dagger of the Squire who held it; which being by the King's order delivered to him, he then preſumed to command the Spuire to give him the ſword alſo; but the young ſpark bravely ſaid, A King's ſword could not become a Knave's hand; and he would not deliver it him: at this Tyler offering to approach the page, the Lord Mayor of London, who only waited for an occaſion to hazard his life in ſurpriſing ſo proud a Traytor, ſnatched the King's dagger out of the ſheath in Tyler's hand, and ſheathed the tame in Tyler's body; whereupon Philpot ſaiuted him with his ſword; and he dropped down dead.

This ſudden and unexpected action at firſt diſmayed the King, but being aſſured of preſent ſuccour from the citizens, he took courage, and being ſurrounded by his Nobles, they gave defiance to the headleſs rout, wnich wanted neither will nor power to revenge their captain's death. But each one expecting when the other ſhould begin, they ſtayed looking upon one another until the news was brought that the militia of London, under the conduct of Sir Robert Knowles, approached in battle array.

At this the Rebels flung down their weapons, and every one ſhifted for himſelf, Jack Straw eſcaping with the reſt; ſo that the field was preſently clear of them; at which the King much rejoiced, and in the ſame place he made William

Walworth, John Philpot, Ralph Standiſh, John Laud, Nicholas Twifield, and Nicholas Bramber, Knights.———The above noble action being executed with a Dagger, it is ſaid to be the reaſon of that weapon appearing in the Arms of the City of London.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

Of the many Depredations committed by other Rebels in divers Parts of the Kingdom.

WHILE theſe tumults were thus in agitation, by the procurement of John Ball, that pernicious Prieſt before ſpoken of, one John Wray was ſent into Norfolk and the adjacent counties, in order to excite the commons to inſurrection, on like motives, and to join with Tyler; which took ſo ſuddenly, that in Herefordſhire, about St. Alban's, and at Bury St. Edmunds, in Suffolk, on Corpus Chriſti day, to the number of fifty thouſand, were aſſembled under the conduct of one Robert Weſtborne, an inn-keeper, who outrageouſly deſtroyed and demoliſhed all the Noblemen and Gentlemen's houſes of note, uſing the perſons ill they found in them, and putting to death all the profeſſors of the law they could find, as they looked upon them as their greateſt enemies.

They took Sir John Cavendiſh, Lord Chief Juſtice of the King's Bench, cut off his head, and placed the ſame upon the pillory in St. Edmund's Bury. They beheaded John of Cambridge, the Prior thereof, and John de Lakinbuith, one of the Priors of Commoignes, carrying them in triumph, and placing them upon poles on the ſaid pillory.

They cauſed the convent to ſurrender up all obligations, and writings obligatory in their cuſtody, and all their charters of privilege, which Canutus the founder, had beſtowed upon that houſe, which, the more to endear themſelves to their favour, they cancelled, and delivered to the townſmen; with many more outrages too tedious to mention in this ſmall book.

In like manner in Norfolk, under the command of John Litiſter, a Dyer of Norwich, the like outrages were committed.—From their hot-headed and rebellious fury the Earl of Suffolk but narrowly eſcaped at North Waltham in Norfolk.

They ſtiled their Captain King of the Commons, and forced the Lords Scales and Moreley, with divers other Worſhipful

Kights to wait on him at table, and becauſe Sir Robert Saul refuſed to do it, they moſt inhumanly beat out his brains with a great ſtick.

Hugh Spencer, Biſhop of Norwich, to ſuppreſs theſe inſults, by his noble example drew the Knights and Gentlemen reſiding thereabouts to arm themſelves, and take the field, who ſoon afterwards put the rebels to rout, and took their captain, whoſe head he ſoon cauſed to be ſtruck off. He alſo took their chaplain Wraw priſoner, who was ſent to London to receive his trial, where he was, according to his demerits, hang'd, drawn, and quartered.

Likewiſe upon the Saturday following Corpus Chriſti day, the townſmen of Cambridge by threats enforced one James Granceſter to be their leader, exacting an oath from him and his brother Thomas to be loyal to their encorporation, and to join with them in the execution of their deſigns.

Preſently after they fell upon Corpus Chriſti College, which they miſerably ranſacked; by tearing, burning, or ſpoiling whatſoever writings, charters, and books

they could come at, and took away all the plate, veſtment, and treaſure they could find, enforcing the ſeniors and ſtudents of that college by oath to renounce and diſclaim all, and whatſoever charters grants, privileges, and franchiſes had been formerly beſtowed on that houſe, and to acknowledge from henceforth ſubjection to the Mayor and Burgeſſes of Cambridge.

From thence they went like a torrent to St. Mary's Church, where they broke open all the cheſts, and took out all the treaſure and church ornaments.——Their fury being on foot, they left nothing undone that was barbarous and inhuman; and paſſion having drowned reaſon, they cared not what miſchief they did, nor to whom, ſo that they could but make their malice ſufficiently conſpicuous to all the clergy.

From Cambridge they went to the priory of Barnweil, a mile off, which they, like ſo many Saracens defaced, felling down trees, ſpoiling the walks, and ſetting fire to every thing that remained unſacred.—Tired with doing, but not in the leaſt ſorry for having done ſo many ſad

crimes, they retired back again to Cambridge, where in the market-place they conſumed with fire all the ordinances, conſtitutions, and ſtates of the univerſity; and all other particular books, rolls, parchments, &c. they could come at, taking up the aſhes, and flinging them in the air, diſdaintully crying out, Away with theſe Clerks Cunning; and then in the night every one ſhifted for himſelf and ſtole away; ſome on horſeback, and ſome on foot.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

Of the Concluſion of theſe Rebellions.

THE royal power which had been ſo long foiled and trod under foot, no longer could brook ſuch intolerable debaſement; but to repair and eſtabliſh itſelf, proclamation was made that all men who had horſe and armour, and loved the King, ſhould forthwith come to London in their beſt manner.—There were never ſeen ſo great a number of horſemen in England. The muſters were taken upon Black-Heath, where the King himſelf, mounted on a goodly courſer, amongſt the armed men, and having his ſtandard royal advanced before him, daily rode forth to view his people, rejoicing to be ſeen amongſt them, and acknowledged their Lord.—It is recorded, That within three days ſpace there appeared upon that heath for the King's ſervice, no leſs than forty thouſand horſemen, bravely accoutred.

The force had been employed againſt

the Kentiſh men, who again began; but the King was perſwaded by the Nobility and Gentry of that country to proceed by ordinary Juſtice, which was accordingly done. The King's peace was proclamed in every place, agreeable to his letters from London, dated June 17, in the 4th year of his reign, to the great encouragement of all his good ſubjects, and confuſion of bad.

There were executed above one thouſand five hundred in different places, beſides five of a new forlorn company; who having deſperately dared to gather head again in Eſſex, about Billerica, had tendered to the King certain inſolent demands; which were juſtly rejected, and they ſlain. The Lord Thomas of Woodſtock, Earl of Buckingham, the King's uncle, with Sir Thomas Piercy, brother to the Count Northumberland, were ſent with force againſt them.——The Rebels, though very numerous, were broken at the very firſt onſet, with a charge made upon them by a rank in front of ten men with arms and lances.—There was taken eight hundred horſes belonging to to the Rebels.—Sir Thomas Treſilian was prin-

cipal actor in matters of juſtice, which he rightly and ſeverely executed.

The King himſelf had ſo great a force of horſemen with him, that Sir Walter Lee ſaid in his ſpeech to the men at St. Albans, there was not a blade of corn or graſs left within five miles of the king's perſon.

Amongſt many hundred others, who were brought before Judge Treſilian, was Jack Straw, who behaved in a moſt inſolent and audacious manner, during the time of his trial; but no ſooner was the ſentence of death paſſed on him, than he was encompaſſed with thoſe horrors of deſpair which await the guilty conſcience; and he confeſſed, that a ſcheme was plotted for murdering of the King and his chief nobles, that very day on which Wat Tyler was ſlain, had not Sir William Walworth killed him as he did. What obligations then muſt not this kingdom for ever be under to that worthy patriot!

And thus ended this monſtrous rebellion, which tended to and muſt have accompliſhed the deſtruction of this kingdom, had it not been for the gallant behaviour of the citizens, to reward whom, King Richard knew not what to do; but that this glorious action might never be forgotten he ordered that the Bloody Dagger in reward of Sir William Walworth's killing Tyler with the King's dagger (as beforementioned) ſhould be added to the City Arms, which was only a plain croſs before.—And to this day a village between Newington and Camberwell, at which place Sir William had a country houſe, in remembrance of his name, is called Walworth.

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